



Latest  
Photo of  
Hetty Green

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The Sylvia Ann Howland Estate  
Fund of \$1,500,000 to Be Divided on Death of Hetty Green.

# AMERICA'S RICHEST WOMAN FINANCIER

by Cooper & G.W.



Edward Mott Robinson  
the Father of Hetty Green

TO thousands of persons scattered all over this country, possibly all over the world, the announcement that Hetty Howland Robinson Green, the shrewdest and richest of America's women financiers, has called her son to the management of her property, has a stronger interest than that which all of us feel in the affairs of so conspicuous a figure. The dropping of the reins is taken to indicate failing powers in this remarkable woman, and, in spite of her frugal and abstemious habits and the fact that she comes of long-lived stock, that her life is nearing its close. To the persons referred to, Mrs. Green's death is of vastly more consequence than any act of hers living, for it will release a fortune of some million and a half of dollars for final division among them—a fortune secured to them nearly fifty years ago by a New Bedford maiden lady in a will, the content of which by Mrs. Green constituted the strangest and most mysterious case of the kind ever fought in the United States courts.

Just who will be the beneficiaries under this will when Mrs. Green dies nobody in this world knows. The division of the fortune will prove one of the most difficult tasks ever undertaken by lawyers. Until Mrs. Green dies no one can tell even the basis on which the division will be made. Not only the date of Mrs. Green's passing away, but even the hour and minute may be an issue of the most vital importance, requiring careful examination and, possibly,

the nicest calculations of differences in time.

The property in question is part of the estate of Sylvia Ann Howland, Hetty Green's aunt, who died a spinster in New Bedford in the year 1865. After making a large number of private and public bequests, Miss Howland left the residue of her estate to three trustees, who were to administer it and, during the life of her niece, Hetty, pay her the income. On her death, the principal was to be divided among the lineal descendants of Gideon Howland, Sylvia Ann Howland's grandfather, who died in 1823. Gideon left thirteen children, all of whom married and reared families; and with these thirteen children to start from, it may readily be seen that the lineal descendants today, nearly a century after the death of old Gideon, would make a formidable array. The trustees, under the will, have kept run of many of them, and, reposing in the safety of New Bedford attorneys, are family trees on which are traced the descent of populous families from Gideon Howland. But there are branches which have dropped out of sight entirely, and nobody has a complete list of the heirs.

In all the life of Hetty Green there is no more romantic chapter than that which involves her relations with her aunt Sylvia; the latter's curious will, disposing of an estate of

more than \$2,000,000—an immense amount of property in those days before swollen fortunes became so common; and Hetty Green's attempt to break the will and substitute in its place another which she produced after her aunt's death, and which the trustees maintained was a forged document. Months were spent in the preparation of evidence bearing on this point, and thousands of dollars were expended for expert witnesses, photographic reproductions of signatures of Sylvia Ann Howland and their enlargement. But the issue was never determined, the decision of the court sustaining the original will and rejecting that produced by Hetty Green, being based on a point of law.

It is interesting to note, in view of Mrs. Green's proverbial frugality and plain mode of living, that the foundation of her fortune rested on silk stockings. Way back in the eighteenth century, Isaac Howland, great-grandfather of Hetty, set to work to make a fortune. The amazing of the first \$1,000 was his greatest difficulty. In those days many scholars were pined between the states and the West Indies in the merchant service, and the sailors wore silk stockings into port on their return trips. Old Isaac Howland bought these, washed and ironed them, and sold them at a good profit. That gave him his start, and when he died, in 1832, his fortune was a large one for those times.

Isaac Howland's granddaughter, Sylvia Ann Howland, was possessed of a fortune of over \$2,000,000, a prodigious sum for a childless woman of simple tastes living in a country town. Hetty Green as a girl spent much of her time with her aunt Sylvia. As to whether she entertained any real affection for her, there is a conflict of testimony. Certainly Hetty professed such affection after her aunt's death, claiming that it was reciprocated by her aunt, and that they had made wills in each other's favor. As to the relations between Hetty and her father, Edward Mott Robinson, there is no uncertainty. They were far from cordial; and a legal decision by which Mr. Robinson came into the possession of a large share of the Howland fortune was distasteful both to Hetty and her aunt Sylvia, who maintained that the Howland money should have been kept in the Howland family. Mr. Robinson died in 1865, leaving Hetty, his only child, about a million dollars outright, and some \$5,000,000 in trust, the income to be hers during her life. The will was a great disappointment to Hetty, for she had hoped to secure her aunt's property outright. She objected to its being probated, but later withdrew that objection and made no contest. But after the will had been confirmed by the supreme court of Massachusetts, she and her fiancé, Edward H. Green, brought suit in the United States court to compel the trustees to perform an agreement which she claimed her aunt had made with her and which was embodied in a will which she produced as being her aunt's last will and testament. This will left all the property to Hetty, and contained the following interesting declaration, referred to in the subsequent litigation as the "second page" of the will:

Be it remembered that I, Sylvia Ann Howland of New Bedford, in county of Bristol, do hereby make, publish and declare this, the second page of this will and testament, made on the eleventh of January, in manner following: to wit, hereby revoking all wills made by me before or after this one—I give this will to my niece, to show if there appears a will made without notifying her, and without returning her will to her through Thomas Mandell as I have promised to do. I implore the judge to decide in favor of this will, as nothing would induce me to make a will unfavorable to my niece; but being ill and afraid if any of my caretakers insisted on my making a will to refuse, as they might leave or be angry, and knowing my niece had this will to show, my niece fearing also after she went away—I hearing but one side, might feel hurt at what they might say of her, as they tried to make trouble by not telling the truth to me, when she was here even herself. I give this will to my niece to show, if absolutely necessary to have it, to appear against another will found after my death. I wish her to show this will, made when I am in good health for me; and my old torn will made on the fourth of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty, to show also a proof that it has been my lifetime wish for her to have my property. I therefore give my property to my niece as freely as my father gave it to me. I have promised him once, and my sister a number of times, to give it to her, all excepting about one hundred thousand dollars in presents to my friends and relations. In witness thereof I have set thereto my hand

House at  
Seventh and Walnut  
Streets New Bedford said to  
be Hetty Green's birthplace

and seal, this eleventh day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two.

SYLVIA ANN HOWLAND.  
(Signed)

Such was the curious, rambling, incoherent document on which Hetty Green based her claim on her aunt's fortune. The trustees fought the claim on two grounds—first, that the relations between Hetty and her aunt Sylvia had not been so cordial as to have led the latter to leave the former all her property; and second, that the signature to this so-called "second page" was a forgery. The litigation which followed is in many respects the most remarkable in the annals of the law. As nearly all the evidence was in the form of depositions, little of it was published in the newspapers, and is now available only in the transcript of the record, a volume of over 1,000 closely printed pages. The trustees spent \$150,000 in defending the will, and the fight lasted through the better part of two years.

The chief struggle was over the genuineness of the signature already referred to. The conflict of expert testimony was extraordinary, demonstrating how completely scientific opinion may differ. Here were three signatures of Sylvia Ann Howland, one admittedly genuine. But it appeared on superimposing the other two over this, that the covering was so exact, letter for letter, stroke for stroke, and that not merely this covering existed, together with identity of spaces between the letters and words, but that the locality on the paper and the distance of the signatures from the margins so nearly coincided, that the defendants, supported by some of the best experts in the country, brought forward the theory that this coincidence was the result, not of chance, but of design, and that the doubtful signatures had been forged by tracing them over the genuine.

Wall street and State street sent the most eminent judges of signatures to support this theory. Commercial colleges sent their presidents and their teachers of handwriting. The coast survey sent its most eminent members from Washington either to sustain or combat the hypothesis of the defense. Recourse was had to the magnifying glass, to laboriously traced enlargements, to photographic copies. Learned chemists testified as to the composition of the various inks. Lithographers and engravers added the weight of their testimony to one side or the other. Harvard university

Hetty H. B. Green, from  
a picture taken in  
her girlhood



was represented by three of its most distinguished savants—Professor Alexander Agassiz, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Professor Benjamin Peirce, the famous mathematician.

Professor Peirce's testimony was perhaps the most astounding of any. Qualifying as an expert on the doctrine of chances, he stated with positive conviction that the coincidence between the admittedly genuine signature of Sylvia Ann Howland and the doubtful one could not occur, except by design, once in two thousand six hundred and sixty-six millions of millions of millions of times, or 2,666,000,000,000,000,000,000. "This number," the witness stated, "far transcends human experience. So vast an improbability is practically an impossibility. Such evanescent shadows of probability cannot belong to actual life. They are unimaginably less than those least things which the law cares not for." And then, as if this were not improbability enough, the witness stated that considering the coincidence of the location of the signature on the page, improbability would be increased ten and possibly a hundred fold.

Yet the plaintiffs met this apparently insurmountable testimony by producing a number of checks which had been drawn by President John Quincy Adams, which showed an even greater coincidence than these Sylvia Ann Howland signatures.

How a jury would have decided this interesting and bewildering issue will never be known. It never was considered by judge or jury. On a point of law, it was held that Hetty Green's own testimony was the sole support of the plaintiff's case, and that as it was not corroborated, it could not be considered. The alleged will was rejected, and the old will stood, securing to the lineal descendants of old Gideon Howland some million and a half of dollars so soon as Hetty Green should die.

Some of these days the newspapers of the world will announce the death of America's most noted woman financier. Out of the millions who read that announcement, thousands will get ready to present their claims to the Sylvia Ann Howland trust. Genealogies will be searched, the old family Bibles will be brought out and studied, an army of attorneys will be pressed into service; and at goodness knows what expense and trouble and labor the fortune kept intact for nearly fifty years will at last be distributed in accordance with the terms of Sylvia Ann Howland's will.

After cards 50 guests sat down to a chicken supper.

Mrs. C. W. Hodgson left Wednesday afternoon to visit her mother in Nebraska.

The O. E. S. P. club meets at the home of Mrs. Matt Clements next Thursday afternoon.

Joe Brennan and Miss Marie Collins were married in Salt Lake this week.

Mrs. George O'Son of Salt Lake is visiting her sister, Mrs. O. C. Lockhart.

Mrs. James Waters of Salt Lake is the guest of Mrs. Arthur Williams.

The 500 club met Thursday afternoon at the home of Mrs. W. D. Sutton on Norfolk avenue. The home was beautifully decorated with asters of all colors.

The guest prize was awarded to Mrs. George Olson of Salt Lake, and first prize to Mrs. O. C. Lockhart. Refreshments were served.

O. E. S. gave a social at the Masonic temple on Friday evening.

Mrs. Kate Olinier and daughter Lottie left for Newark, N. J. on Wednesday morning to visit relatives.

AMERICAN FORK.  
(Special to The Herald-Republican.)  
American Fork, Sept. 17.—Mrs. Sadie Henry, assisted by her sisters, entertained at a miscellaneous shower, in honor of her sister, Miss Annie Hindley, Monday night, at the home of Mrs. Sarah B. Chipman.

Mrs. James Chipman of Salt Lake is the guest of her daughter, Mrs. T. S. Friday.

Miss Agnes Firmage, who has spent the summer in Ogden, was here the fore part of the week.

Miss Bertha Adams is in Salt Lake, the guest of Mrs. Emma Hemphill.

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Storrs of Richfield spent Sunday and Monday in American Fork.

Arthur Stout of Salt Lake was in American Fork the fore part of the week.

Mrs. Alva Chipman of Salt Lake is here, the guest of her sister, Mrs. T. S. Friday.

Mrs. Vera Johnson was in American Fork the fore part of the week.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Dunkley spent Sunday in Salt Lake, the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Dunkley.

Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Misener were in Provo Thursday.

H. M. Adamson of Blackfoot, Idaho, is visiting his brother, Peter Adamson, st.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Adamson and their son and daughter, from Cheyenneville, Okla., arrived from Cheyenneville, Okla., Sunday.

## State Society

TOOELE.

(Special to The Herald-Republican.)  
Tooele, Sept. 16.—Mrs. Campbell of Butte was the guest at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Berke the first part of the week.

Mrs. Samuel Merritt of this place spent several days of this week in Salt Lake.

Mrs. Caldwell and daughter, Miss Flossie Caldwell, returned home on Thursday after a visit to several points in Idaho.

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Ashlock and children will leave Tooele on September 23 for a visit to Kansas City, Mo., and other points.

Miss Mary Bowden of Alberta, Canada, is visiting friends in Tooele.

Mrs. Minnie Paine of Salt Lake is the guest of J. C. Orme and family.

Mrs. Mary McCushton of Bauvard, Nev., is visiting at the home of her father, Mr. James Kirk.

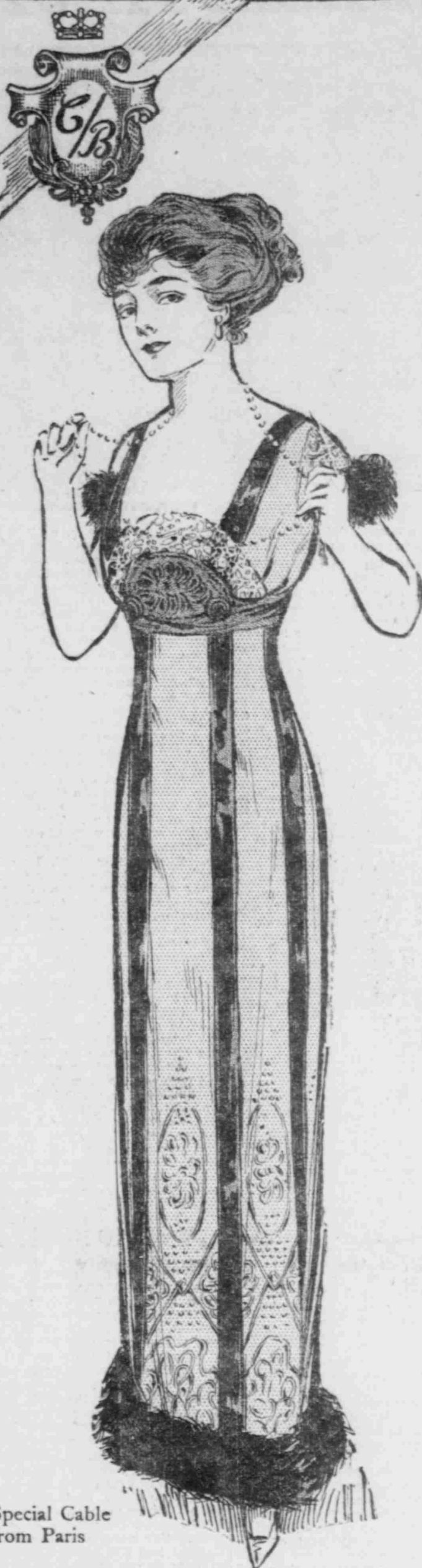
A grand ball will be given by the firemen of this place at the Opera house on Monday, September 19, for the benefit of the Tooele volunteer fire department. The Copper City orchestra will furnish music.

(Special to The Herald-Republican.)  
Park City, Sept. 17.—Sam Treweek gave a dinner at the Wabash mine on Sunday in honor of Misses Lottie Olinier and Eva Hughes, who have come east to visit relatives. The invited guests were Misses Jessie McDonald, Kathryn Cunningham, Minnie Cunningham, Eva Hughes, Lottie Olinier, and Messrs. Jenks Nelson, Percy Parker, Alex. McDonald, Will Treweek and Sam Treweek.

Dr. R. E. Wight and family spent Monday in Park visiting friends.

Hugh McDonald Superintendent of the King Consolidated mine, entertained the following guests on Tuesday: Misses Lottie Olinier, Eva Hughes, Jessie McDonald, Bessie McDonald, Tennie McDonald, Minnie Cunningham, Kathryn Cunningham, and Messrs. Jenks Nelson, Alex. McDonald and Bob Ransay.

A party was given by Mrs. Oscar Froisland and Mrs. Frank McEwen at Mrs. Froisland's home on Norfolk avenue, Wednesday. Euchre was played. The prize winners were: Gentlemen's first, S. E. Whitley; second, Sherman Fargo; ladies' first, Mrs. E. J. Beggs; second, Mrs. Geo. E. Beggs.



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Extracts will appear in this same space every Sunday. These cables are published in full on the first of each month in a free booklet entitled "C/B Style Cables." Ask for it at any corset counter or write us for it. Strout, Adler & Co., 45 East 17th Street, New York.

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